



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Sara L. Hensley

**SUBJECT: STRATEGY TO INCREASE
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
RATES**

DATE: 05-17-04

Approved

/s/

Date

PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum responds to the March 17, 2004 Mayor's Budget Message and provides a strategy on how the City of San José will increase the graduation rate and reduce the dropout rate for high school students in San José.

BACKGROUND

The National League of Cities (NLC) announced that San José, along with four other cities: Corpus Christy, TX; Hartford, CT; Phoenix, AZ; and Providence, RI, was selected as a recipient of a 24-month technical assistance effort to expand options and innovations in high school education. The goal is to develop strong high school learning communities by developing and sustaining reform strategies that prepare college ready graduates – including those students most at-risk of dropping out. The grant, made possible through the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, will help cities identify their needs, develop and implement action plans to meet those needs and, provide guidance and outside experts to assist in this endeavor.

ANALYSIS

The latest figures show that one in five, or 1,500 San José high school seniors, are not graduating from high school. San José averages about 700 high school dropouts per year. School Districts in San José have invested millions of dollars to fund alternative programs that range from continuation schools to teen parent schools in an effort to reduce high school drop out rates as well as community schools and alternative schools for special needs. Currently, over 1,800 San José youth are enrolled in some kind of alternative high school program. San José's alternative programs provide a solid foundation to expand and enhance the educational options available to at-risk students. The goal is to catch the youth who are not succeeding in a regular high school and to provide them an alternative that allows for a successful graduation.

The City is a critical partner in ensuring San José youth succeed through high school graduation. The National League of Cities recognizes that when students are not successful in high school, our entire community is affected, some of the likely impacts may include:

- Higher unemployment rates
- Lesser prospects for sustained business development
- Higher costs related to crime and incarceration
- Reduced disposable income among residents
- Higher costs for welfare and other government assistance

Next Steps/Strategy

The City has developed a policy team with various community, school district and municipal leaders, including representatives from the City of San José, the County Office of Education, Silicon Valley Manufacturers Group, People Acting in Communities Together (PACT), Central County Occupational Center, the Metropolitan Adult Education Program, and Community Based Organizations. With NLC's technical support, this policy team will develop a strategy to reduce high school drop out rates in San José.

On May 19, this policy team will meet with representatives from the NLC to develop timelines and establish goals for the next 24 months. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services will facilitate and convene the continued collaboration of this partnership in conjunction with the Mayor's Office and NLC.

COST IMPLICATIONS

There are no increased cost implications associated with this memo.

COORDINATION

This report was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

/s/

SARA L. HENSLEY
Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services